

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

August 14, 2018

Re: Open Letter on the Right to Housing

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On 22 November 2017 your government announced a national housing strategy based on its commitment to “progressively implement the right of every Canadian to access adequate housing.”

Consultations held in recent months regarding the National Housing Strategy demonstrated a strong consensus that implementing legislation must explicitly recognize the right to housing as defined in international human rights law. Widespread homelessness and lack of access to adequate housing, in so affluent a country as Canada is clearly one of the most critical human rights issues facing all levels of government. Rights-based legislation must establish mechanisms for those affected to raise systemic issues regarding the progressive realization of the right to housing and ensure that governments will respond by implementing remedies. These mechanisms need not rely on courts but they must be effective.

In addition, the legislation must require goals and timelines for the reduction and elimination of homelessness that are consistent with international human rights obligations to realize the right to housing within the shortest possible time based on available resources. It should ensure that Canada meets its commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to eliminate homeless by 2030. It must also include measures to eliminate the deep disparities in access to adequate, affordable, safe, and secure housing for Indigenous peoples, women, members of racialized communities, persons with disabilities, trans and gender-diverse people, older adults, children and young people, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons.

Draft legislation has been developed by civil society and experts, demonstrating how this can be accomplished and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you.

We call on the government to ensure that the National Housing Strategy legislation:

- affirms the recognition of the right to housing as a fundamental human right;
- implements accountability mechanisms through which those affected by homelessness or inadequate housing can hold governments accountable for the progressive realization of the right to housing;
- ensures that the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate and National Housing Council are independent, adequately resourced and given authority to make recommendations and require remedial action for compliance with the right to housing;
- provides for an adjudication body which includes both experts in human rights and persons with lived experience of homelessness or inadequate housing, to hold accessible hearings into systemic issues affecting the progressive realization of the right to housing and to recommend effective remedies;

- requires goals and timelines for the elimination of homelessness and access to adequate housing, in accordance with Canada's obligations under international human rights law and commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- mandates rights-based participation by, and accountability to, diverse individuals and communities affected by homelessness and inadequate housing, in all NHS mechanisms including the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, National Housing Council, adjudication body, and community initiatives;
- provides resources and support for local lived-experienced-led monitoring of NHS programmes and for community initiatives to promote the right to adequate housing engaging all levels of government;
- provides for initiatives to identify and address the distinctive barriers, needs and rights of Indigenous peoples, co-developed with Indigenous peoples' organizations, as well as housing strategies for First Nations, Inuit, Métis Nation, and urban and rural Indigenous partners, negotiated on the basis of Inuit-to Crown, government-to-government, nation-to-nation relationships, to ensure the right to housing of Indigenous peoples both on and off reserve, in rural and urban settings, consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The legislation implementing a rights-based national housing strategy provides an historic opportunity for the federal government to address, as a priority, a critical human rights issue at home and at the same time to provide leadership in human rights internationally. It is the first time that legislation implementing the right to housing has been contemplated in Canada, and it is critical that this be done right.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue with the government in the coming weeks and months, as this important legislation is brought forward.

Sincerely,

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing
Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada
Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada
Emily Paradis, Independent Researcher
Bruce Porter, Social Rights Advocacy Centre
Tim Richter, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

CC

The Honourable Andrew Scheer, P.C., M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Attachment

SIGNATORIES

Individuals

1. Alex Himelfarb, Former Clerk of the Privy Council
2. Senator Art Eggleton, PC
3. Irwin Cotler, PC, OC
4. Claudette Bradshaw, PC, ONB
5. Kevin Page, Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy; Former Parliamentary Budget Officer
6. Mathieu Fleury, Ottawa City Councillor; Chair, Ottawa Community Housing
7. Matthew Green, Hamilton City Councillor, Ward 3
8. Naomi Klein, Author
9. Craig Kielburger, Social Entrepreneur
10. David Hulchanski, Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Dr Chow Yei Ching Chair in Housing, University of Toronto
11. Mitchell Cohen, Daniels Corporation
12. Alexis L. Wood, Director/Producer
13. Andrew J. Bond, MD, MHA(c), CCFP, Inner City Health Associates
14. Anne Latendresse, Directrice des programmes de premier cycle, Département de géographie, UQAM
15. Antoinette Wertman Hon BSc., MD, Inner City Health Associates, St. Michaels Hospital, Toronto
16. Rabbi Emeritus Arthur Bielfeld, C.M., Temple Emanu-El
17. Cathy Crowe, C.M., Street Nurse, Distinguished Visiting Practitioner, Ryerson University
18. David Wiseman, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section
19. Deborah Pink, MD, FRCPC, Psychiatrist, Inner City Health Associates
20. Deborah Sinclair, MSW, PhD(c), RSW, University of Toronto
21. Elvin Wyly, Professor, The University of British Columbia
22. Gary Bloch MD CCFP, University of Toronto
23. Janet Mosher, Professor, Faculty of Law, York University
24. Laila Jamal, MD, FRCP (C), Inner City Health Associates
25. Leigh Chapman, RN, BScN, BA(Hons), MSc, PhD Candidate
26. Margot Young, Professor, UBC Law
27. Marie-Eve Desroches, PhD Candidate, Urban studies, Institut national de la recherche scientifique
28. Marie-Neige Laperrière, Professeure de droit, Sciences administratives, Université du Québec en Outaouais
29. Martha Jackman, University of Ottawa
30. The Rev. Michael Shapcott, Deacon, Church of the Holy Trinity - Trinity Square
31. Monia Mazigh, Author and Human Rights advocate
32. Patricia Cavanagh, MD, FRCPC
33. Penelope Simons, Professeure agrégée, Université d'Ottawa, Faculty of Law
34. Peter Rosenthal, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Adjunct Professor of Law, University of Toronto
35. Pieter de Vos, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta
36. Richard J. Doan, MD, FRCPC, Inner City Health Associates; Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto
37. Roxie Danielson, RN, BScN, Innercity Family Health Team
38. Samer Muscati, International Human Rights Program, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto
39. Susan Woolhouse, MD, MCISc, CCFP, FCFP, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates
40. Vince Calderhead, Pink Larkin Lawyers

National and International Organizations

41. A Way Home Canada, Melanie Redman, President and CEO
42. Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, Ranjith Kulatilake
43. ACORN Canada, Judy Duncan
44. Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Sandeep Prasad
45. Amnesty International, Alex Neve
46. Amnistie internationale, Genevieve Paul
47. Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada, Anita Khanna
48. Canada Without Poverty, Harriett McLachlan, Deputy Director

SIGNATORIES

49. Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Tim Richter
50. Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD), Jeremy Dias
51. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Gauri Sreenivasan
52. Canadian Coalition Against LGBTQ2S+ Poverty, Lori Ross
53. Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, Kathy Vandergrift
54. Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Jeff Morrison
55. Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council, Debbie McGraw
56. Canadian Medical Association, Dr. Laurent Marcoux, President
57. Canadian Mental Health Association Interlake Eastern, Tristan Dreilich
58. Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, Susan Macphail
59. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Stephen Gaetz
60. Canadian Poverty Institute, Ambrose University, Derek Cook
61. Canadian Women's Foundation, Paulette Senior, President and CEO
62. Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Valerie Lemieux
63. Citizens for Public Justice, Joe Gunn
64. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Jewelles Smith, Chair
65. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Steven Estey
66. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Elizabeth Dandy
67. Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada
68. Families Canada (formerly Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs), Kelly Stone
69. Habitat for Humanity Canada, Mark Rodgers, President and CEO
70. Habitat International Coalition
71. Lived Experience Advisory Council, Lived Experience of Homelessness Network, Kym Hines
72. Maytree Foundation, Elizabeth Mclsaac
73. Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Lynne Groulx, Executive Director
74. Oxfam, Julie Delahanty
75. Raising the Roof, Michael Brathwaite
76. Right to Housing Coalition
77. Social Rights Advocacy Centre, Bruce Porter
78. The Leap, Bianca Mugenyi, Co-Executive Director
79. UNICEF Canada, Lisa Wolff
80. United Church of Canada
81. United Way / Centraide Canada, Dan Clement, President and CEO
82. Women's Shelters Canada, Lise Martin
83. YMCA Canada, Peter Dinsdale, O.Ont., President and CEO
84. YWCA Canada, Maya Roy, CEO; Anjum Sultana, MPH

Provincial and Territorial Organizations

85. Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), Kenneth Hale
86. Alberta Network of Public Housing Agencies, Harvey Voogd, Interim Executive Director
87. Alberta Rural Development Network, Jonn Kmech
88. BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Jill Atkey
89. BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Trish Garner
90. BC Society of Transition Houses, Joanne Baker
91. CERA - Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, Katie Plaizier
92. Colour of Poverty Colour of Change
93. First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, Adrienne Montani
94. Income Security Advocacy Centre, Jennefer Laidley
95. Justice for Children and Youth, Mary Birdsell
96. M'akola Housing Society, David Seymour, VP
97. MacKillop Centre for Social Justice and The PEI Coalition for a Poverty Eradication Strategy, Mary Boyd
98. Metis Urban Housing Association of Saskatchewan Inc
99. The Mustard Seed, John Rook
100. Network of Non-Profit Housing Providers of Saskatchewan
101. Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Marlene Ham
102. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Debbie Douglas
103. Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH)
104. Public Interest Alberta, Joel French
105. Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), O.Ont., Chief Executive Officer

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106. Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec (RCLALQ), Maxime Roy-Allard
107. Réseau québécois des organismes sans but lucratif d'habitation (RQOH), Stéphan Corriveau
108. Right to Housing (Manitoba), Tristan Dreilich
109. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), Shalini Konanur
110. Yukon Anti Poverty Coalition, Kristina Craig, Executive Director
111. Yukon Status of Women Council, Charlotte Hrenchuk

Community Organizations

112. Adsum for Women and Children, Sheri Ecker, Executive Director
113. Anova, Shelley Yeo
114. Association of Local Public Health Agencies, Loretta Ryan, CAE, RPP
115. Atlohsa Native Family Healing services, Raymond Deleary
116. Centerpoint Facilitation, Tammy Ouellette
117. Centre de counselling de Sudbury Counselling Centre, Carole Lamoureux
118. Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University, Barb MacQuarrie, O.Ont.
119. Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Ann Fitzpatrick
120. Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Avvy Go
121. The City Institute, York University, Linda Peake
122. Comox Valley Transition Society, Heather Ney
123. The Dream Team, Joanna Pawelkiewicz
124. Emily Murphy Centre, Lisa Wilde
125. End Homelessness Winnipeg, Lucille Bruce
126. Federation of Metro Tenant Associations, Maryanna Lewyckyj, Acting Chair
127. Four Counties Addiction Services Team, City of Kawartha Lakes, County of Haliburton, Northumberland County and Peterborough, Kerri Kightley
128. Fred Victor, Mark Aston
129. Gillian's Place: Empowering Abused Women of Niagara, Tanja Loeb, Executive Director
130. Haven Toronto, Lauro Monteiro
131. Healthy Transportation Coalition, Trevor Haché
132. Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG), Waterloo Region, Lynn Macaulay
133. Homeward Trust, Susan McGee, Chief Executive Officer
134. Human Development Council, Saint John, New Brunswick, Randy Hatfield
135. Innerscity Family Health Team, Jo Connelly, Executive Director
136. Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness, Rafi Aaron, Spokesperson
137. Ishtar Society, Laurie Parsons
138. Kelowna Women's Shelter, Karen Mason
139. Lived Experience Circle of Winnipeg, Al Wiebe
140. Lloydminster Metis Housing Group Inc.
141. London Homeless Coalition, Charlotte Dingwall, Chair
142. North Coast Transition Society, Christine White, Executive Director
143. Parkdale Community Legal Services, Johanna Macdonald, Clinic Director
144. Peel Alliance to End Homelessness, Ian Hanney
145. Pivot Legal, Anna Cooper
146. Quint Development Corporation, Len Usiskin
147. Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope, Donna Kroocmo, Executive Director
148. Sistering, Patricia O'Connell
149. Social Planning Toronto, Peter Clutterbuck
150. South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society, Linda Sankey
151. South Okanagan Women in Need Society, Veronica Mora
152. Southwest Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee, Margaret MacPherson
153. Springtide Resources, Leila Sarangi
154. Street Health, Kapri Rabin, Executive Director and Joyce Rankin RN MN MBA, Clinical Manager
155. Street Nurses Network, Roxie Danielson, RN, BScN
156. Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group, Ann Batisse, Executive Director
157. Together Against Poverty Society, Stephen Portman
158. Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, Kira Heineck
159. Toronto Disability Pride March, Melissa Graham
160. Toronto Drop In Network, Susan Bender

SIGNATORIES

161. United Way Central and South Okanagan Similkameen, Reanne Amadio
162. Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, Victoria McLaughlin
163. Voices from the Street and Women Speak Out, Dawnmarie Harriot and Lubna Khalid
164. Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, Harmy Mendoza, Executive Director
165. Women's Housing Planning Collaborative, Hamilton, Deirdre Pike and Katherine Kalinowski
166. Women's Resources of Kawartha Lakes, Lori Watson
167. Woolwich Community Services, Kelly Christie
168. Working for Change, Mike Creek
169. YMCA Northern Alberta, Nick Parkinson
170. YWCA Hamilton, Medora Uppal
171. YWCA Toronto, Heather McGregor, CEO